

Naofragio

International Newsletter for Subsea Treasure Salvors

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Naofragio Newsletter is a specialized business periodical dedicated to the undersea treasure recovery activity — Researching wreck locations, studying history, setting up diving operations, recovering coins and artifacts, working with investors, studying legal issues, coordinating with government agencies and building marketing skills.



Our Shipwreck Coins & Artifacts Scammer of the Month: 'Pirate Gold Coins'

The point of this article is to advise anyone with a stock of shipwreck coins what *not* to do. This fellow, Joe Bissell, in the San Diego area, provides a flashy web site as you see in the photo here but all sales run through his eBay listings. We don't know why this approach is used.

See the next two pages for *Pirate Gold Coins* company on eBay —



(I) PERU LIMA 8 ESCUDOS 1710 22kt. PLATED GOLD DOUBLOON 1715 FLEET TREASURE COIN

1 viewed per hour

Condition: --

Quantity: 1 4 available / 13 sold

Price: US \$299.00
No Interest if paid in full
in 6 mo on \$99+*

Buy It Now

Add to cart

Best Offer:

Make Offer

Add to Watchlist

Sell pirate 100%
Con Visit See

PERU LIMA 8 ESCUDOS 1710 22kt. PLATED GOLD DOUBLOON 1715 FLEET TREASURE COIN

Sorry, eBay wizard — what? Ok, you tell me it's a gold doubloon from Lima, Peru, and from the 1715 fleet wrecks and it is a treasure coin, except it is plated with a microscopically thin layer of 22kt gold? And you want \$299 for it? So you are selling a fake? A counterfeit? First of all, it is not a coin because it is not real. It is a bad replica. But my \$299 is real, and you appear to want it, real bad.

And I had better hurry because your ad says just a "limited quantity remaining." It comes with a 100% buyer satisfaction guarantee but you do not accept returns. How does that work? — you know, if I could ever find your no-street-address company? Yet I should feel confident in your firm because you report an eBay 100% positive feedback and show 5 gold stars ratings for item described, communication, shipping time and charges.

Your ad also has a badly worn one escudo coin (a doubloon is 8 escudos — you don't mention that) for \$2,450. You also offer a purple rock for \$3,900 (size unstated), with an all caps headline. (See below)

We must learn more about this wonderful retailing system called eBay —
It allows this sort of fraud and provides lots of happy talk for new merchants: "Now more than ever, we're proud to support the owners of small businesses who use our platform to reach for their dreams. Many eBay sellers are independent business owners that operate with small teams and limited resources. In addition to enabling their growth on our global ecommerce platform, we've launched several programs that support and celebrate them. We Empower People and Create Economic Opportunity.

eBay Inc. is a global commerce leader that connects millions of buyers and sellers around the world. We exist to enable economic opportunity for individuals, entrepreneurs, businesses and organizations of all sizes. Our portfolio of brands includes eBay Marketplace and eBay Classifieds Group, operating in 190 markets around the world.

Commissions:

- 12.35% if total amount of the sale is \$7,500 or less (calculated per item)
- 7% if total amount of the sale is over \$7,500 (calculated per item)



TUMBAGA GOLD PENDANT INCAN AZTEC ARTIFACT PIRATE GOLD COINS TREASURE

This headline is really impressive: you offer this rare pre-columbian golden pendant for a quarter million dollars telling the public it is both Incan and Aztec as well as having been captured by pirates 400 years ago? And you mention *tumbaga* gold. What a historian! Tumbaga refers to a mix of gold, silver and copper used by native American tribes to make objects. It almost does not exist in its original form as native spiritual artifacts. The Spaniards stole and then melted down such items as this by the ton early in their exploitation of the Americas during the 1500s. Today the term applies almost exclusively to crude ingots because that is all that remains of this lost cultural treasure. The Numiscadero Spanish-English numismatic dictionary points out "Tumbaga ingots contained as little as 5% gold, 10% to 14% silver and 35% to 80% copper. There is said to be at least one ship that sunk carrying a large quantity of these exotic pieces — a remarkable future museum once recovered.

More of this website's hype:

"Over 6 mil hits a month! From GUNS to GOLD and SILVER to SWORDS. This website is designed to capture the rarest and most beautiful Gold Escudos, Doubloons, Cobs, Reales and minted coinage from around the world. From the farthest reaches of the earth, from ocean to ocean- we search out each piece of Gold, Pieces of Eight, every buried or Sunken Treasure. Constantly searching, tirelessly pursuing and discovering each Gold Cob, each Doubloon, ship wreck artifacts (such as guns and swords) all Treasures."

AMETHYST GEODE HOME DECOR CRYSTAL QUARTZ PIRATE MINERAL ROCK

Please clarify, what is a *pirate* mineral? You are blasting out so many adjectives. Something should stick and get that really stupid buyer to whip out a credit card. Was the rock in a pirate's home décor? By crystal quartz we trust you mean quartz crystal. No, wait — you already said it was amethyst from a geode. You don't appear to know the first or second thing about minerals.

All kidding aside, I know what it is: A piece of low-grade scrap amethyst from Brasil's Minas Gerais huge mines. An entire half geode of such stone is offered on eBay by another vender for 375€.

Item location: La Jolla, California, United States (No address or phone provided)

Shipping to: Worldwide. Excludes: Angola, Cameroon, French Polynesia, Libya, Mongolia, Suriname, Guyana, Mauritius, Chad, Madagascar, New Caledonia, Iran, Western Sahara, Laos, Republic of the Congo, Seychelles, Sudan, Venezuela, Somalia, Burma, Cuba, Yemen, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Central African Republic, Niger, Saint Pierre and Miquelon, Tajikistan, Anguilla, British Virgin Islands, Cape Verde Islands, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Botswana, Eritrea, Swaziland, and Lesotho.

Great, now I have a list of the world's less desirable and trusted nations.

But the British Virgin Islands? Those people must already know you are a scammer!

Profile: Bill Warren

Veteran diver and professional singer Bill Warren called us from the Ukraine earlier this year and captured our attention. He reports to have worked closely with several shipwreck historians and zeroed in on the precise locations of several 400-year old shipwrecks. Here is just a small bit of his life history, summarized by the editor from Bill's 2009 book *Treasure Hunter*.



"Some people are drawn to water. Others are afraid of it. I love it. Both of my parents grew up in Southern California. I was born and raised there. After doing extensive family history research, I found out that my Great, Great, Great Grandfather, Captain William Warren, from Prince Edward Island, Canada, was a shipbuilder and sea captain. It was a pleasure for me to learn that I had ancestors who had a love of the sea and ships.

Each summer, when I was young, my parents would take a tent to Huntington Beach and we would 'live' there during the summers. My parents taught me to swim in the sea. I learned that storms would wash up items, including remains of old ships, on the beach.

I began to dive for sea urchins commercially years ago. The Japanese had run out of their own supply and found that California had good quality urchins. A sea urchin is a four-inch diameter spiny creature that lives on kelp and is found in water a few inches deep to over one-hundred feet deep. Break one of its small needle-sharp spines off in you and you get protein poisoning. Inside each shell are five orange colored sacks called 'roe' that look like a human tongue. It is a caviar and the Japanese will pay up to \$75 per pound for it in Tokyo. I helped some Japanese businessmen set up their processing plants in Los Angeles, Ventura and Santa Barbara and began diving from a small boat. I found I could put around three thousand pounds of urchins on the deck of my boat in a day. After a few months, I was able to buy more boats and eventually ended up running four boats with four separate crews.

I read a newspaper article about a Spanish shipwreck off Oceanside, California. The wreck was called "Trinidad." I started my first research on this wreck. I gathered up every bit of information I could find. The television show called "I Search for Adventure" with host Bill Burrid also featured that wreck. It seemed nobody could find it. It was touted as the first Spanish ship to come to California and predated Cabrillo's discovery by a few years. If it was there and I could find it, history would change.

Then an Oceanside public works employee showed me a Polaroid picture he had taken at Buccaneer Beach. A severe storm had hit that area and began washing away the beach. The photo showed the timbers of an old wreck. It was near the highway some 80 feet from shore. I was granted a city permit that would allow me to excavate the timbers or both and we began to dig with a backhoe on the beach. I was only given two days to do the work.

At about eight feet down we hit the timbers and I removed a large block of wood. Scripps Institute of Oceanography in San Diego did a carbon 14 dating test to determine the approximate age of the wood. It showed the wood was around 500 years old. I was delighted. My next step was to begin a search off shore. Using sub-bottom profiling equipment we found our target. Sub bottom gear produces an image of what is buried under the sand. In 25 feet of water and under about ten feet of sand, you could see an image of what looked like a ship.

I was immediately stopped by the State of California for not having its permission to dig or touch anything on the seafloor. The city of Oceanside and the State got into a battle and the State won. California claims all of the islands offshore out to a distance of one hundred miles. I was not happy. I tried to get the State, under the direction of the Division of State Lands to work with me. It did not happen.

I later found out Buccaneer Beach was named that because of a young girl and her father who had found gold Spanish coins on that very beach many years before. (A buccaneer is a pirate who preyed on Spanish ships centuries ago.)



This is a Brazilian coin created in the 1800s by counterstamping an 8 real coin from Peru

Counterstamps: Messages added to coins over history

A stamp or impression placed on a coin after it has left the mint. A counterstamp is an official struck mark or stamp applied by a governmental entity to a coin or token to revalue, validate or grant legal tender status in the issuing authority's area of influence.

Counterstamps were frequently used as advertising gimmicks on coins. The counterstamp leaves a permanent impression on the metal and may hurt or help the value to collectors. Engraved marks, or work for purely decorative reasons, or full overstrikes are not considered either counterstamps or countermarks. In Spanish the term is *contramarca*. One Spanish writer distinguishes between the two, and uses *contramarca* for countermark, but uses *resello* for counterstamp.

There are at least seven different political / governmental countermarks types:

- Stamps on coins with individual letter punches by individuals and circulated.
- Stamps on coins from prepared punches by individuals and circulated.
- Stamps on coins by political organizations and sold to raise funds and circulated. (Countermarked ...sold by political organizations as a way to raise funds.)
- Stamps on coins by individuals/firms and sold as souvenirs for profit. This includes political countermarks on coins that were sold as souvenirs.
- Stamps on coins by individuals/firms and sold many years after the event as souvenirs for profit. (Souvenir countermarks made many years after an event for sale to collectors.)
- Stamps on coins by individuals/firms and sold as authentic but are bogus fantasies.
- Stamps put on coins with dies instead of planchets. Medal dies with political themes that also were used to countermark coins at the time of the event. While their original purpose was to strike medals, on rare occasions such dies also were used on coins.

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A guide from Christie's:

10 things you need to know about Chinese ceramics

This summary of information about Chinese ceramics is from the elegant and detailed Christie's auction house web site. It provides us mortals with a simple awareness of the sorts of porcelains which were loaded on Manila galleons. This would be one of the most sophisticated firms to contact when Asian ceramics are recovered.

Below: Typical Chinese export porcelain items of about 1690 to 1700.



Christie's insights and advice about porcelains:

The term Ming dynasty has been used referring to ceramics taken east on Manila galleons. The Great Ming as it was called, was ruled by Han Chinese from 1368 to 1644 after the collapse of the Mongol-led Yuan dynasty. The Ming dynasty was the last imperial dynasty of China. Obviously, since Manila galleon shipments began in the mid-1500s, only the first half of cargos would have been Ming goods, but it is the rarity and skill of the work that creates the value today.

Hands-on learning: There is a lot to learn about palettes, glazes, reign marks and more, plus why it pays to handle as many pieces as possible. Chinese potters have copied ceramics for hundreds of years, both out of reverence for an earlier period and to fool buyers — so beware. Large numbers of Chinese ceramics are offered around the world at reputable auction houses, which, unlike museums, allow potential buyers to handle them, so make the most of the opportunity.

This creates an understanding of the weight of a piece and the quality of the painting — of how a ceramic should feel in the hand.

Ask questions: Building the knowledge needed to authenticate Chinese ceramics can take many years. Reading reference books can give structure to the field, but pick specialists' brains and ask as many questions as possible.

Familiarise yourself with different palettes and glazes: Palettes and glazes evolved over the centuries. For example, the *wucai* (literally 'five-colour') palette was used in the Wanli period (1573-1619) and led to the *famille verte* palette, which was introduced in the Kangxi period (1662-1722). This was a palette of green, predominantly, plus blue, red, yellow and black. The *famille rose* palette was added to the ceramic painter's repertoire in the 1720s and featured a prominent rose colour. The enamels were opaque and there was a wider repertoire of colours. In the 18th century, there were many technical advances, and glazes such as copper-red and flambé were introduced.

Ceramics were made all over China: The kilns in the north and south produced different types of wares and glazes. For example [during the Manila galleons period], Jun wares from the Song dynasty were produced with beautiful lavender glazes, often highlighted by abstract purple splashes. The Dehua kilns specialised in ceramics with white and cream glazes. In the late Ming dynasty in the 1600s, Dehua wares were creamy in tone, but by the 1800s, these had became more ivory and white. Also during the Ming dynasty, the kilns at Jingdezhen in the south of China produced most of the blue and white ceramics.

Look underneath: The way the base of a vessel was cut, finished and glazed changed from one dynasty to the next, which can help enormously in the dating and authenticating process.

This decorative element changed a lot over the centuries. ...Chinese potters mastered the technique of firing blue and white wares to achieve a more even cobalt-blue tone. But the tone varied from one dynasty to the next. During the Wanli period (1573-1619), for example, blue and white wares often had a greyish-blue tone, while in the Jiajing period (1522-1566), the tone was almost purplish-blue.

Pay attention to shapes and proportions: The shape of ceramics also evolved. Song dynasty ceramics, for example, were often inspired by nature and foliate in form. Chinese ceramics are also well known for their beautiful proportions. A vase or bowl that looks out of proportion is an indication that a neck or mouth has been ground down. What makes the condition of a ceramic acceptable or otherwise depends on whether or not it is Imperial-quality and when it was made. For example, on a non-Imperial porcelain vessel made in the 1600s — such as a Kraak ware charger — you would expect to see some kiln grit or kiln dust on the base and perhaps a firing flaw that would have occurred in the kiln. Both would be acceptable.

However, you would not expect to find these flaws on an 1700s Imperial mark and period ceramic, because the firing techniques would have been refined. Fifteen years ago, only mint-condition mark and period ceramics would have been considered acceptable. Now, however, collectors will consider ceramics that have been broken and restored, or which have hairline cracks.

Familiarise yourself with marks: Reign marks state the dynasty and the name of the emperor and were used on all ceramics made for the emperor and his imperial household. Do not rely on a reign mark to establish the age of a piece, however. Marks were often copied and can be apocryphal.

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Below: This Qing porcelain plate of about 1735 features a Christian scene.



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Sailors from Holland commissioned the Chinese to produce plates with their ship, the Vryburg, on them in about 1756.

Thanks for joining us for this issue! We will have another newsletter for you soon. What news and comments can you share with us? Please send us an e-mail whenever you find something of interest. Wishing you well — Gary Segovia.gary@yahoo.com